

## Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Information and Referral Services

### What is the service?

- Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies (HMHB) is a private, not-for-profit organization that provides *a single point of access* for information and referral services to families in areas such as health insurance, nutrition resources, family planning, child care, and immunizations.
- HMHB receives public funding from the Washington State Department of Health, Department of Social and Health Services and the Health Improvement Partnership of Spokane to operate four statewide, toll-free information and referral lines.
- The Maternal-Child Health line provides eligibility screening and referrals to Medicaid and WIC, as well as referrals and health education materials regarding pregnancy, prenatal care, maternity support, childbirth, and breastfeeding.
- HMHB provides eligibility, screening, information, and referrals to Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program through the Healthy Kids Now! line.
- The Family Planning/TAKE CHARGE line provides family planning information and referrals for men and women to TAKE CHARGE providers.
- In 2005, HMHB added the Family Food Hotline which provides eligibility, screening and application connections to WIC and the Basic Food program (food stamps), and information and referrals to food banks and the summer meals program.
- HMHB builds partnerships and coalitions within the maternal and child health community. These collaborative partnerships build bridges between stakeholders and service providers to help shape the best services and policies for pregnant women, children, and families in Washington State. These include the Immunization Action Coalition of Washington and the Breastfeeding Coalition of Washington.
- Website: [www.hmhbwa.org](http://www.hmhbwa.org)

### How/where is the service provided?

- HMHB operates four toll-free statewide information and referral lines:
  - Maternal-Child Health 1-800-322-2588
  - Healthy Kids Now! (SCHIP) 1-877-543-7669
  - Family Planning/Take Charge 1-800-770-4334
  - Family Food Hotline (Food Stamps) 1-888-4-FOOD-WA (888-436-6392)
- HMHB's bilingual information and referral specialists screen callers for eligibility and assist them in applying for and accessing Department of Health and Department of Social and Health Services programs and services, including First Steps (Medicaid-funded prenatal and delivery care and maternity support services), WIC, Children with Special Health Care Needs, CHILD Profile Immunization Program, TAKE CHARGE, and other Family Planning services, Children's Health Insurance Program, and Basic Food (food stamps). For languages other than English and Spanish, HMHB uses the AT&T Language Line interpreter service.
- Beyond providing information and referral services, HMHB staff help families understand eligibility criteria and how to apply for and enroll in programs, and the services provided by each program and organization.

- HMHB's localized, multi-language health education materials uniquely serve diverse populations throughout the state, reducing cultural and linguistic barriers.

### **Who is eligible for the services?**

- HMHB's services are available to all residents of Washington State.
- Although HMHB primarily serves low-income pregnant women and families with children under age five, calls on HMHB's toll-free lines, and requests for health education materials, are received from all socio-economic and racial/ethnic groups.

### **Who is receiving the service?**

- During 2004, approximately 53,000 people called HMHB's toll-free lines.
  - 32,773 calls to Maternal-Child Health line
  - 13,527 calls to HealthyKidsNow! Line
  - 6,235 calls to Family Planning/TAKE CHARGE line
- More than 90% of callers were Medicaid-eligible (i.e., with incomes below 185% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) for pregnant women, or below 200% FPL for children), although only about half of those eligible were already enrolled in Medicaid. Callers were primarily families with children under age five, and pregnant women.
- More than 28,000 pregnant women received a copy of HMHB's Prenatal Care and Baby Book which is available in eight languages, and many thousands more obtained other health education materials from HMHB.

### **Issues/concerns**

- The Department of Health's ability to continue to obtain federal matching support of HMHB at current levels is being threatened. HMHB's contract with DOH is funded through a variety of sources, including state funds and federal Maternal Child Health block grant and Medicaid funds. These funding sources are all experiencing new demands and possible cuts. Deep cuts would threaten HMHB's ability to deliver services.
- Medicaid clients call HMHB with questions about obtaining health care, because many health care providers no longer accept medical aid coupons. There is no universal source of information about health care access in the state, but the sources available all indicate local variation in access to care for Medicaid eligible recipients. Access is particularly difficult in rural areas, and for families seeking dental care for their children, obstetric and gynecologic care, and other specialist care.
- The barriers which prevent families from accessing needed programs and services have been well documented over the years. Those barriers have been exacerbated by increasing costs for housing and other essentials. Rapidly rising gasoline costs, in particular, make it more difficult than before for families to access needed services, especially in rural areas of the state.
- The state ranks tenth in the nation in food insecurity. Many families, who are already availing themselves of all food programs and services, still find their families hungry at the end of the month. The "safety net" does not provide enough for families to "make ends meet."